**Amendments to the Claims**

Please amend Claims 35, 36, 41, 54, 55, 58, 59, 63 and 68. Claim 69 is new. The Claim Listing below will replace all prior versions of the claims in the application:

**Claim Listing**

1-34. (Cancelled)

35. (Currently Amended) An isolated aldonic acid ester of a ~~an optionally substituted~~ polysaccharide, starch or a hydroxyalkyl derivatized starch.

36. (Currently Amended) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 35, wherein the ~~optionally substituted~~ polysaccharide is a ~~is an optionally substituted~~ starch fraction.

37. (Previously Presented) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 36, wherein the starch fraction is an amylopectin degradation fraction.

38. (Previously Presented) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 37, wherein the amylopectin degradation fraction is obtained by acid degradation and/or degradation by α- amylase of waxy corn starch.

39. (Previously Presented) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 38, wherein the starch fraction has an average molecular weight (MW) of 2000-50 000 Dalton and an average branching of 5-10 mol% α- 1,6-glycosidic linkages.

40. (Previously Presented) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 38, wherein the starch fraction has an average molecular weight (MW) of 2000- 50 000 Dalton and an average branching in the range of 10 to 25 mol % α - 1,6-glycosidic linkages.

41. (Currently Amended) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 36, wherein the ~~optionally substituted~~ starch fraction is a ~~hydroxyethyl fraction of~~ waxy corn starch degradation fractions that has been derivatized to form a hydroxyethyl starch fraction.

42. (Previously Presented) The aldonic ester as claimed in Claim 41, wherein the average molecular weight (MW) of the hydroxyethyl starch fraction is in the range of 2-300 000

Dalton, and the substitution level molar substitution (MS) is between 0.1 and 0.8, and the C2/C6 ratio of the substituents on carbon atoms C2 and C6 of the anhydroglucoses is between 2 and 15.

43. (Previously Presented) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 35 wherein the alcohol from which the alcohol component of the aldonic acid ester is derived has a molecular weight in the range from 80 to 500 g/mol.

44. (Previously Presented) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 35, wherein the alcohol from which the alcohol component of the aldonic acid ester is derived has a pKa in the range from 6 to 12.

45. (Previously Presented) The aldonic ester as claimed in Claim 35, wherein the alcohol from which the alcohol component of the aldonic acid ester is derived includes an HO-N group or a phenol group.

46. (Previously Presented) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 35, wherein the alcohol from which the alcohol component of the aldonic acid ester is derived is selected from N-hydroxysuccinimide, sulfo-N-hydroxysuccinimide, substituted phenols and hydroxybenzotriazole.

47. (Previously Presented) The aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 46, wherein the alcohol from which the alcohol component of the aldonic acid ester is derived is a N-hydroxysuccinimide or sulfo-N-hydroxysuccinimide.

48. (Previously Presented) A solid comprising at least one aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 35.

49. (Previously Presented) A solution consisting essentially of at least one aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 35.

50. (Previously Presented) The solution as claimed in Claim 49, wherein the solution has at least one organic solvent.

51. (Previously Presented) The solution as claimed in Claim 50, wherein the solution has not more than 0.5% by weight water.

52. (Previously Presented) The solution as claimed in Claim 49, wherein the solution has at least one aprotic solvent.

53. (Previously Presented) The solution as claimed in Claim 52, wherein the solvent is dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), N-methylpyrrolidone, dimethylacetamide (DMA) and/or or dimethylformamide (DMF).

54. (Withdrawn- Currently Amended) A method for preparing an isolated aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 35, wherein at least one ~~optionally substituted~~ aldonic acid is reacted with at least one alcohol component in aprotic solvent.

55. (Withdrawn- Currently Amended) The method as claimed in Claim 54, wherein the alcohol component is employed in 5 to 50-fold molar excess based on the ~~that optionally substituted~~ aldonic acid.

56. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 54, wherein the reaction takes place with the use of at least one activating reagent.

57. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 56, wherein the activating reagent comprises at least one carbodiimide.

58. (Withdrawn- Currently Amended) The method as claimed in Claim 56, wherein the activating reagent is employed in 1- to 3-molar excess based on the ~~optionally substituted~~ aldonic acid.

59. (Withdrawn- Currently Amended) The method as claimed in Claim 54, wherein a compound which liberates an alcohol component for reaction with the ~~optionally substituted~~ aldonic acid is employed.

60. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 59, wherein a carbonic diester is employed.

61. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 54, wherein the reaction takes place at a temperature in the range from 0 to 40°C.

62. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 54, wherein the reaction takes place at a low base activity.

63. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) A method for preparing pharmaceutical active ingredients coupled to a polysaccharide, starch or a hydroxyalkyl derivatized starch ~~polysaccharides or polysaccharide derivatives~~ on free amino functions, wherein at least one aldonic acid ester as claimed in Claim 35 is reacted with a pharmaceutical active ingredient which has at least one amino group.

64. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 63, wherein the reaction takes placed in aqueous medium.

65. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 64, wherein the pH of the aqueous medium is in the range from 7 to 9.

66. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 63, wherein the reaction takes place at a temperature in the range from 0°C to 40°C.

67. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in Claim 63, wherein the pharmaceutical active ingredient is a polypeptide or a protein.

68. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) A pharmaceutical active ingredient which is coupled to a polysaccharide, starch or a hydroxyalkyl derivatized starch ~~an optionally polysaccharides~~ and is obtained by the method as claimed in Claim 63, wherein the pharmaceutical active ingredient is denatured in anhydrous medium and enters into unwanted side reactions with carbodiimides, such as inter- and intramolecular crosslinking or reaction with phosphate groups of the pharmaceutical active ingredient.

69. (New) The isolated aldonic ester of Claim 35 wherein the hydroxyalkyl starch is hydroxyethyl starch or hydroxypropyl starch.